



EBT WIRELESS PROJECT

June 09 Newsletter



DHS

From the Editor – Jan Walters

Total Transactions	EBT Transactions	Total Sales on Wireless
2008 Total: 27,670	4252 (15.4% of total)	\$724,404
2009 Totals:		
January 09 265	17 (6.4%)	\$14,678
February 291	42 (14.4%)	\$23,494
March 382	39 (10.2%)	\$26,075
April 579	44 (7.6%)	\$28,492
May 4134	448 (10.8%)	\$145,541

Your sales for May 2009 are greater than any month since we've started this program! How awesome! The previous highest month was Oct. 08 with \$131,000. Thank you for providing access to EBT families and all the hard work that you folks do.

May Facts:

- EBT transactions are 236% higher than 2008. (448 compared to 190 a year ago)
- Total transactions are 163% higher than 2008. (4134 compared to 2542 a year ago)
- EBT Sales are 267% higher than 2008. (\$4832 compared to \$1811 a year ago)
- Total sales are 143% higher than 2008. (\$145,541 compared to \$101,772)
- The average transaction amount for May is \$35.21 compared to \$40.04 a year ago.
- The average EBT transaction amount for May is \$10.79 compared to \$9.53 a year ago.

Year to date sales for 2009 are \$238,279 compared to \$186,327 from a year ago. This is an increase of 128%.

With all the new farmers who signed up this spring, there is greater access for EBT households this year. There are 119 markets/roadside stands across Iowa that has farmers who can accept EBT cards.

In May 2009, there were 137,552 Food Assistance/EBT families in Iowa. \$38,296,022 in benefits were issued in May to these families.

A suggestion on the survey forms was to include more information about what markets were experiencing EBT, debit/credit sales. Here are interesting facts regarding May sales:

There were 89 farmers/producers who had sales. Fifty-nine (59) of those farmers had EBT sales. The vendors with the highest number of EBT transactions were:

- Scavo Market (62) – Des Moines
- Iowa Orchard (37) – Des Moines area
- Nostalgia Farm (30) – Quad City area

- Storybook Orchard (21) – Central Iowa
- Westrum Produce (21) – Central Iowa
- Rinehart Family Farms (18) – Central Iowa

Congratulations to Scavo Market for having the highest number of EBT transactions and the highest EBT sales. Great job!

Farmer Responsibilities

Please report any technical problems with the wireless equipment right away. If you are having difficulty processing transactions call Tracy or Jan or the 888 number on the side of your machine. We do not want to pay monthly fees for equipment that does not work or if you do not know how to use the equipment. Thanks for your cooperation.

New Wireless Equipment – Model Verifone 8020

As our purchased Nurit 8000 equipment is aging and developing technical issues, we're starting to upgrade to the Verifone 8020. The Verifone company purchased the Nurit brand a year or so ago. The 8020 looks like the Nurit 8000 with some differences. The most noticeable difference is that the cover over the paper roll is 'blue' and the word 'Verifone' is on the equipment. The big difference is the battery. Call Tracy or TMS for instructions on how to remove the battery.

Upcoming Events

13th Annual Community Food Security Coalition Conference – October 10-13, 2009 at the Des Moines Convention Center. Their website is www.communityfoodconference.org. We've been selected to present information about the EBT Wireless Project.

Farm Bureau Annual Conference – Des Moines Convention Center December 2nd & 3rd, 2009. More information coming.

Des Moines Downtown Winter Season Markets – Des Moines is holding their indoor/outdoor markets at Capital Square/Nollen Plaza; the same as previous years. The dates are November 20th & 21st, and Dec. 18th & 19th. The Friday lunch market will be from 11AM-2PM. For more information contact: Kelly Foss (515-286-4928) or Molly Kotval (286-4911) if you're interested in selling at this market.

Customer Survey Results for 2009

The customer survey response so far is phenomenal! Just a reminder, please put the cards in the sack of any customer who uses a plastic card for payment. We've had lots of responses from customers who paid with cash. The comments are interesting, but we really want feedback from those who are using plastic (EBT, debit or credit). If you need more cards, contact Tracy. Here are the results so far:

- Why do you like to shop at farmers markets? (Top reasons in descending order)
 - Good/fresh food
 - Fresh Produce
 - Buy locally grown/made items
 - Support local farmers

- Friendly (vendors and atmosphere)
- How often do you shop at farmers markets?
 - Every week – 51%
 - Every 2 weeks –16%
 - Once or twice a month– 11%
 - More than once a week – 7%
 - Not often, seldom, every few month, as often as I can, etc. – 15%
- What markets do you shop at? (Top 5 responses thus far)
 - Northpark Mall Davenport
 - Des Moines Downtown
 - Noelridge -Cedar Rapids
 - Burlington
 - Iowa City
- What did you buy today at the market? (Top 6 in descending order)
 - Fresh produce
 - Baked goods
 - Vegetable plants/fruit bushes/trees
 - Honey/jam/jelly
 - Flowers
 - Meat
- What would you like to buy but can't find at the market? (in descending order)
 - Eggs
 - Parsnips
 - Lots of other things, such as
 - More vendors
 - Arts & crafts
 - More fresh flowers
 - More organic food
- If a year round market was in your area, would you shop at it during the winter months?
(Apparently, the question should have specified 'an indoor' year round market. Many customers are assuming that it's outside and no produce will be available.)
 - Yes – 71%
 - No – 20%
 - Depends – 9%
- What services could the market offer or provide that would make you shop there more often? (in descending order)
 - Restrooms
 - Hand washing stations
 - Canning/freezing classes
 - Chairs/sitting areas to relax & eat goodies
- How did you pay for your items today?
 - Cash –62%
 - Credit – 17%
 - Debit – 15%
 - EBT – 6%

- Checks – <1%

Additional comments from customers:

- I like to shop at farmers markets because vendors are friendly & like to answer questions
- Burlington area – The quality is superb. More vendors should take farmer market checks
- Love the market manager. She's great!
- I'm 73 yrs old & enjoy the whole idea of farmers markets. It's a great tradition.
- The addition of an indoor market has been wonderful for the Quad Cities
- Clinton Market – An overhead roof for vendors; like a picnic shelter. People could shop in center aisle.
- Creston Market – The lady that sells honey and soap is a very sweet lady.
- Ia City EBT customer would like to see more places to use EBT.
- I have specific vendors I buy from because of their knowledge.
- Hand out recipes or directions for cooking
- Going to market is a social event for me & my family. We eat and buy every Saturday AM.
- I'm tired of seeing other state's names on produce but I understand some is necessary.

Refresher Training

If any one would like to have a refresher training session, please call Tracy to schedule an appointment. We can do phone training or explore other options for meeting with you.

Helpful Hints!

1. We have received a few calls from farmers indicating that their new wireless machine keeps shutting off by itself. Here is how to turn off the batter saver:
 - Get to Credit Sale page
 - Hit the red colored 'Menu cancel' key
 - The machine may tell you to enter Password. Remember; the password is always the current date mm/dd/yyyy or 06192009, Hit enter after entering the date
 - You will now see the 'Menu Screen'. Press '3' Merchant Options
 - Now press '5' for Battery Saver
 - Now press '1' to turn the Battery Saver off.
 - The machine will now ask 'Are you sure? Hit enter for Yes.
 - Now you're done! The machine will stay on until you shut it off. Hit Menu Cancel to return to the Credit Sale screen.
2. Loading Paper – We have also received a few calls from farmers stating that the receipts aren't printing. Please check to see how you have loaded the paper. The paper must always feed up from the bottom. Make sure the plastic cover over the paper is firmly closed. If you have further problems with this, contact Tracy or call TMS (the 888 number is on the side of your machine.)

Important Information on Turning Off Your Machine!

If you decide to turn off your wireless machines, it is extremely important that you contact Tracy first, not Total Merchant Services (TMS). The EBT Wireless Program is a special program and therefore the closure forms HAVE to come through us. If you contact TMS directly, you may incur the \$295 early termination fee. We have had two farmers go directly to TMS and one of the farmers even sent the State of Iowa owned equipment back to TMS and it cannot be retrieved. The same farmer also threw away our signs. Because of these actions, the farmer has been billed for the loss State of Iowa equipment. If you have any questions on this issue, please contact Tracy.

Reminders:

1. Since we have so many new farmers, remember that you cannot ring up a sale for another vendor. You could lose your Food Stamp certification and be terminated from the Wireless Project.
2. Since you are paying for the commercial transaction fees, be sure to keep track of what you are paying so you can use those expenses as a tax deduction.
3. You cannot set a minimum purchase amount. If an EBT household wishes to purchase \$.50 in onions, you do need to process the transaction. Same for any debit or credit transaction.
4. If your machine quits working, be sure to call Jan or Tracy right away! Or if need help during the weekend, you can call the 800 phone number on the side of your machine.
5. Let us know if you need any supplies such as paper rolls, power cords, or battery.
6. The second battery that we provide to you was purchased by DHS. If you ever need to return your wireless machine, be sure to keep one battery, carrying case and signs. We will pick them up from you.
7. **Charge your batteries before market.** You should always have a charged battery, ready to go for market. If a battery is not holding a charge, contact Tracy for a replacement.
10. Please make sure to keep the original box that your machine came in as it contains the Sim card, which is needed to identify your machine if you have to call TMS.

Help Desk

We are here to help you!

When you have questions about:

- **Participating in the Wireless project or reimbursement questions? Call Tracy Penick at 515-281-5545 or Jan Walters at 515-281-3588.**
- **What you can sell to EBT customers, or being authorized to accept EBT? Call FNS at 515-284-4035.**
- **Food Assistance eligibility? Call Char Hansen at 515-281-6820.**